

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

14th September 2021

Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Housing – Councillor Adam Brown

Report Title	Proposal for capital funding to replace the Library Management System and associated hardware.
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Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

West	Catherine Whitehead	19 th July 2021
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Other Director/SME	Stuart Lackenby	12 th July 2021
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Claire Hughes	20 th August 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Financial breakdown and capital costings EXEMPT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This proposal for the provision of capital funding to replace the Library Management System and associated hardware across the library estate has combined capital and revenue value of over £500k for the duration of the full contract so requires a key decision from Cabinet before progressing.

2. Executive Summary

- 1.2. This report outlines the proposal for capital funding to be used to procure a replacement library management system contract and replacement equipment associated with the system. It

explains the background behind the required replacement, options considered and recommendations following scrutiny at ELT and Capital and Assets Board.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet/Committee:

- a) Consider and approve the proposal to capital fund the replacement of the Library Management System and associated hardware.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- The Library Management System is a key requirement for delivering the statutory library service
- The current contract must end on 31st March 2022 and cannot be extended. A replacement must be procured in order to ensure continuity of service.
- The associated equipment for running the Library Management System is now 9 years old and at end of life. Replacing the equipment now will ensure that it is compatible with the new system, compatible with West Northants and North Northants IT Roadmaps and future proofed.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The Library Management System (LMS) is the core system that is used by Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service, Community Managed Libraries, North Northants Council and West Northants Council Customer Services, the Schools Library Service and our traded partner HMP Woodhill with our (and their) customers. The LMS (Spark) records borrower account information and their transaction data (issues, renewals, returns and payments). The data gathered also helps to plan the requirements on the library service going forward. The LMS also plays a crucial role in authentication of users of the online services that we offer as well as the self-service terminals, public computers and tablets. It also plays a key role in back office functions including the extraction of management information and Electronic Data Interchange (for invoicing and payments of library suppliers).
- 5.2 The contract with our current provider ended in March 2021 following an initial 5-year contract and a 3-year extension. To ensure continuity of service for vesting day, a short 1-year contract was negotiated with the current provider to allow time to procure a new system in 2021/22.
- 5.3 We now need to re-procure for a new system and new hardware for all Northamptonshire libraries including community managed libraries in order to meet procurement requirements and future proof the library service. This system is an essential system for libraries to function.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Library Management System “Spark” is the current provider’s own product so it is not possible to retain the product outside of a contract with this provider. It was not possible to get a further renewal or extension to the contract due to procurement contract rules but due to the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire a short, 1-year contract was arranged to ensure continuity past vesting day. It was considered best to procure for the new solution in the year 21/22 in order to ensure we could meet the needs of both the new unitary authorities.
- 6.2 As the potential disaggregation of the library service is not on the transformation programme until 2022/23 and the current contract must be replaced before then in accordance with

procurement law, the decision has been taken to procure a single system but to ensure that the ability to disaggregate into two separate authorities at a later date is possible in any system procured.

- 6.3 We have been with the current supplier for 9 years now and even though the library management system market is a niche market place we would be looking to go to tender as technology and processes will have moved forward and we would like to see what systems offer the best value for money for an ever changing library service.
- 6.4 Our existing IT hardware PCs, cash drawers, slip printers, RFID pads and barcode scanners are now 9 years old. The predicted lifespan of this equipment at procurement was 8 – 10 years. Therefor as part of this tender process we would be looking at replacing all of our IT hardware through this capital bid.
- 6.5 There would also need to be some software development by our internal IT departments to ensure that the system is compatible with the council's network and can be locked down for Community Managed Libraries and Customer Service staff in order to comply with GDPR.
- 6.6 The Library Management System's functionality and resilience is reliant on the hardware. Depending on the spec of the chosen system that is procured, replacement equipment will need to be compatible and future proofed and for this reason the two items are considered integral parts of one capital bid.
- 6.7 Though there are S106 receipts in the pipeline for a number of libraries in Northamptonshire, the S106 Officer Stacey Wylie has confirmed that the stipulations around their use are strictly worded for each housing project and usually state it can only be used in a specific area and must be used to enhance rather than maintain or replace something that is already paid for by the council. Therefor this project would not be considered appropriate for the use of these receipts.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There is no revenue budget in the Library service or the Corporate IT to cover the costs associated with the procurement of a new system or the replacement of the hardware. Capital funding would be required for the full costs of this project in year 1.
- 7.1.2 As this is a procurement requiring capital from both North Northants Council and West Northants Council the WNC, as hosting authority for the Library Service, will carry out the procurement and NNC will then provide their allocation of the funding to the West.
- 7.2 The budget for the annual revenue costs of the Library Management System (licenses and hosted services etc) are currently covered by the corporate IT service and no budget for this sits within the Library Service. The exception to this are a few maintenance costs that are picked up within the Library service budget. These annual revenue costs will be fairly apportioned and recharged by the hosting authority in accordance with the IAA agreement.

7.3 Legal

- 7.3.1 We will need to work with LGSS legal to ensure that legal safeguards are put in place to protect the joint ownership of this system. The procurement documents and the contract will reflect

this and this will need to be considered by the transformation programme when full disaggregation of the library service is considered.

7.4 **Risk**

7.5 If we do not procure a new contract, we will not be able to provide the statutory duty to deliver a “comprehensive and efficient” library service as required by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Library service has already been subject to Judicial Review in 2018 and is monitored closely by the DCMS.

7.6 We would not be able to fulfil our obligations to the Community Managed Libraries in accordance with our service level agreements or our income generating contracts with schools (School Library Service) or to the Prison Library (HMP Wood Hill). This would lead to reputational damage as well as the potential loss of contract renewal.

7.7 If we do not replace the physical hardware to run the Library Management System now it will become defunct within the next year or so. The equipment has not been replaced since 2013 so will be 9 years old at time of replacement. Set out the main body of the report here, detailing consideration of the issues and choices that have been considered in formulating the report recommendations.

7.8 **Consultation**

7.8.1 N/A

7.9 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.9.1 The business case for this proposal was considered and approved by the following groups on the following dates:

Adults, Communities and Wellbeing SLT WNC – June ‘21

Adults, Communities and Wellbeing SLT NNC – June ‘21

Executive Leadership Team WNC – 12/7/21

Strategic Capital Board (NNC) – 5/7/21

Capital and Assets Board (WNC) – 13/7/21

7.10 **Climate Impact**

7.10.1 I Since the previous procurement in 2013 the number of computer terminals required has reduced significantly contributing to a reduction in CO2 emissions

7.10.2 Defunct electrical hardware will be recycled via the Council’s WEEE contractor reducing the use of landfill and CO2 emissions.

7.10.3 The Library Service itself encourages use of e-books and the lending of physical items reducing the need to provide multiple copies. By re-using the book in this way, often up to 30 individuals will use the same book rather than buy an individual copy.

7.11 Community Impact

7.11.1 The automation of the library service enables staff and volunteers to focus on more complex enquiries and support vulnerable customers with additional council services such as blue badge and bus pass applications.

7.12 Communications

7.12.1 None.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None.